



Area anti-terror funds increase, but not substantially

BY CAROL EISENBERG
carol.eisenberg@newsday.com

July 6, 2007, 9:45 PM EDT

WASHINGTON -- After all the political fingerpointing over the 40 percent cuts in federal antiterror money to New York last year, the city will do better next year -- but not by much.

The metropolitan area, which includes Nassau and Suffolk counties, will receive \$134 million from the Homeland Security Department's single largest grant program -- a 7.7-percent increase over this year's \$124 million, but still nowhere near the \$207 million it received in 2005.

Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford), the ranking Republican on the House Homeland Security Committee, said he was angry and disappointed to learn of the totals, which have not yet been announced.

"Unfortunately, the Department of Homeland Security still doesn't get it," he said. "While some progress has been made, the bottom line is that New York is still not getting anywhere near what it needs and deserves. It is still down \$73 million from two years ago, and that's indefensible."

Homeland Security officials declined to comment on the figures pending a formal announcement, expected shortly. In the last few months, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has vowed to make the process more transparent, but has also warned that grants were not "an annuity, where it always stays level."

But city and state officials said Friday that they had been encouraged in conversations with homeland security officials to anticipate more.

"If these numbers are correct, that's an anemic increase," said New York State Deputy Public Safety Secretary Michael Balboni.

While boosts to port and transit security have helped New York, Balboni called the urban grant program "probably one of the most important initiatives that Homeland Security funds" because it steers money to high-risk communities.

It also fosters regional readiness, he said. "But you can't do that if you don't have enough dollars to go around."

In addition to the small increase for the metropolitan area, New York State will get more antiterror money through several smaller grants. Two state law enforcement programs will increase 24 percent next year to \$66 million, according to figures shared with King.

King said those increases are welcome, but noted the urban grants are "the heart and soul and symbol of the grants and the one that affects cops and firefighters on the street every day."

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg declined to comment until the announcement is official, but one aide, who asked not to be named, acknowledged that "we had hoped for more. ... This is nothing to write home about."

City officials did achieve one long sought-after goal: For the first time, they will be allowed to use a portion of the grant money for "boots on the ground," as Police Commissioner Ray Kelly refers to staffing.